



## Texting 'helps pupils to spell'

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BBC News education and family

**Children who regularly use the abbreviated language of text messages are actually improving their ability to spell correctly, research suggests.**

A study of eight- to 12-year-olds found that rather than damaging reading and writing, "text speak" is associated with strong literacy skills.

Researchers say text language uses word play and requires an awareness of how sounds relate to written English.

This link between texting and literacy has proved a surprise, say researchers.

These latest findings of an ongoing study at the University of Coventry contradict any expectation that prolonged exposure to texting will erode a child's ability to spell.

### Improving 'hmwrk'

Instead it suggests that pupils who regularly use text language - with all its mutations of phonetic spelling and abbreviations - also appear to be developing skills in the more formal use of English.

**" If we are seeing a decline in literacy standards among young children, it is in spite of text messaging, not because of it "**

Dr Clare Wood

The research, part-funded by the British Academy, suggests that texting requires the same "phonological awareness" needed to learn correct spellings.

So when pupils replace or remove sounds, letters or syllables - such as "l8r" for "later" or "hmwrk" for "homework" - it requires an understanding of what the original word should be.

Instead of texting being a destructive influence on learners, the academics argue that it offers them a chance to "practise reading and spelling on a daily basis".

Using initials and abbreviations and understanding phonetics and rhymes are part of texting - but they are also part of successful reading and spelling development, they say.

"If we are seeing a decline in literacy standards among young children, it is in spite of text messaging, not because of it," said Clare Wood, reader in developmental psychology.

This is an interim report, based on a year-long study of 63 pupils in England, with the final report expected next year, but so far researchers have not found a negative association between using

text abbreviations and literacy skills.

The use of text language "was actually driving the development of phonological awareness and reading skill in children", said Dr Wood.

Story from BBC NEWS:

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